

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 SAM-01 SAB-01 DRC-01 /090 W

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R 131204Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY SANAA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3419

INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

CINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANAA 460

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, YE

SUBJ: PROSPECTS FOR ASSEMBLY APPROVAL OF NEW YARG

CINCEUR FOR POLAD

REF: SANAA 393

1. SUMMARY. PROSPECTS FOR ASSEMBLY APPROVAL YARG BECOMING CLOUDED IN FACE STRONG CAMPAIGN BY GOV. ABU LUHUM AND RETREAT ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT INTO NEUTRALITY. SAUDIS HERE VIEW MAKKI ONLY AS LESSER EVIL THAN AYNi AND ARE ALSO ADOPTING NEUTRAL STANCE, CONFIDENT ABU LUHUM WILL FAIL. FONMIN ASNAG IS, HOWEVER, WORRIED ABOUT OUTCOME. ON BALANCE WE BELIEVE MAKKI WILL BE APPROVED, ALTHOUGH POSSIBLY WITH SIGNIFICANT OPPOSITION. END SUMMARY.

2. IN PAST FEW DAYS I HAVE PAID COURTESY CALL ON NEW PRIMIN MAKKI (ON ADVICE HIS OFFICE I SHOULD NOT WAIT FOR AMBASSADOR'S RETURN) AND SUBSTANTIVE CALLS ON FONMIN ASNAG, MINCOMMO SA'ID, AND SAG MILATT COL. GHUFAYLI (IN ABSENCE ANY SUBSTANTIVE OFFICERS IN DEPLETED SAG EMBASSY).

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3. IT IS APPARENT FROM THESE CALLS THAT NEW GOVERNMENT MAY FACE ROUGHER WEATHER IN OBTAINING CONFIDENCE VOTE FROM CONSULTATIVE ASSEMBLY THAN ANTICIPATED EARLIER BY OBSERVERS. MAJOR REASON IS THAT FORMER PRIMIN AYNI'S BROTHER-IN-LAW HODEIDA GOVERNOR SINAN ABU LUHUM HAS NOT BEEN MOLLIFIED BY INCLUSION NUMBER OF BAATHI SUPPORTERS OF AYNI IN CABINET (INTERIOR, EDUCATION, AGRICULTURE, ECONOMY AND PUBLIC WORKS) AND HAS LAUNCHED MAJOR CAMPAIGN AGAINST MAKKI GOVERNMENT. HE HAS BEEN WORKING HARD ON RECONCILIATION WITH CONSULTATIVE ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT SHAIKH ABDALLAH AL-AHMAR, WHO, ACCORDING TO BOTH ASNAG AND GHUFAYLI, HAS NOW ADOPTED NEUTRAL STANCE. WE SUSPECT, HOWEVER, THAT SAUDI DECISION TO ADOPT SIMILAR NEUTRAL STANCE HAS HAD MORE EFFECT ON AHMAR THAN ABU LUHUM'S IMPORTUNINGS.

4. ACCORDING GHUFAYLI, SAG RECOGNIZES THAT MAKKI LESSER OF TWO EVILS NOT BECAUSE HE IS ANY LESS LEFTIST THAN AYNI BUT BECAUSE HE IS MUCH WEAKER FIGURE. THIS IS DESPITE FACT MAKKI IN HIS PUBLIC PRONOUNCEMENTS HAS GONE TO GREAT LENGTHS TO STRESS IMPORTANCE OF SAUDI-YEMENI TIES AND TO THANK KING FAISAL FOR ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. PRESENT SAUDI ASSESSMENT, ACCORDING GHUFAYLI, IS THAT ABU LUHUM WILL FAIL BY WIDE MARGIN IN DEFEATING VOTE OF CONFIDENCE WHICH MUST TAKE PLACE WITHIN TWENTY-FIVE DAYS OF ITS NOMINATION (PRESUMABLY MARCH 28).

5. ASNAG'S EVALUATION IS MUCH LESS SANGUINE ALTHOUGH HE ADMITTED ABU LUHUM WOULD HAVE TO FACE PRESIDENT IRYANI'S WRATH IF HE SUCCEEDED IN HIS CAMPAIGN. ACCORDING TO ASNAG, YARG IS WORRIED ENOUGH TO START COUNTER-CAMPAIGN OF ANONYMOUS LEAFLETS IN NEXT FEW DAYS. PRESIDENT ALSO HAS ONE CONSTITUTIONAL DISADVANTAGE: SINCE ASSEMBLY IS IN LAST YEAR OF ITS TERM IT CANNOT BE DISSOLVED BY PRESIDENT. ASNAG TOLD ME PRESIDENTIAL ADVISOR MUHAMMAD NU'MAN HAD BEEN DIVERTED TO RIYADH ON WAY BACK FROM CAIRO TO MEET CHIEF-OF-STAFF MASWARI AND COL. ALI ABU LUHUM FOR DISCUSSIONS WITH SAG ON MARCH 12. THEY WERE DUE TO RETURN TO SANAA MARCH 13.

6. COMMENT. WE SHOULD HAVE A BETTER READING ON SITUATION FOLLOWING NU'MAN'S RETURN. ON BALANCE IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT MAKKI IN VERY SERIOUS DANGER ALTHOUGH LARGE NEGATIVE VOTE WOULD BE PSYCHOLOGICAL SETBACK. ONE FACTOR IN MAKKI'S FAVOR IS REGIONAL-CONFIDENTIAL

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HE IS FROM HODEIDA AND TWELVE OF HIS MINISTERS ARE SHA'IS FROM SOUTHERN AND COASTAL REGIONS. HE CAN THUS COUNT ON VOTES OF NUMBER OF LEFTISTS, SUCH AS DEPUTY SPEAKER YUSUF SHAHARI, AN EXTREME LEFTIST FROM HODEIDA, WHO MIGHT OTHERWISE SUPPORT ABU LUHUM'S CAMPAIGN (WHO IS ZAYDI FROM NORTH DESPITE HIS GOVERNORSHIP). WE WOULD ALSO ANTICIPATE THAT SAUDIS MIGHT MODIFY THEIR PRESENT NEUTRALITY IF ABU LUHUM APPEARED TO HAVE A CHANCE. FINAL FACTOR IS POWER OF PRESIDENT WHO WOULD

BE EXTREMELY ANGRY AND COULD WELL RETALIATE IF
ABU LUHUM STROVE FOR MORE THAN PSYCHOLOGICAL
SETBACK TO NEW GOVERNMENT CHOSEN BY PRESIDENT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CABINET, GOVERNMENT REFORM, PERSONNEL APPOINTMENTS, CENTRAL LEGISLATURE
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 MAR 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974SANAA00460
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: SANAA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740346/aaaabrnd.tel
Line Count: 119
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: SANAA 393
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 14 AUG 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <14-Aug-2002 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <09 JAN 2003 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PROSPECTS FOR ASSEMBLY APPROVAL OF NEW YARG CINCEUR FOR POLAD
TAGS: PGOV, YE, SA, (MAKKI)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005